

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-04
NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 /047 W
-----210211Z 101671 /14

R 201123Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9146
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1146

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR EI
SUBJECT: NEW IRISH ATTORNEY GENERAL

1. PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE ANNOUNCED MAY 19 THE RESIGNATION OF ATTORNEY GENERAL DECLAN COSTELLO, WHO WILL BECOME A JUSTICE OF THE HIGH COURT. JOHN KELLY, GOVERNMENT CHIEF WHIP AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TAOISEACH, HAS BEEN APPOINTED ATTORNEY GENERAL.

2. KELLY IS WELL KNOWN IN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY IN STRASBOURG, WHERE HE HAS FILLED IN FOR FOREIGN MINISTER FITZGERALD ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, SOMETIMES RATHER ERRATICALLY. HE WILL NOW IMMEDIATELY TAKE OVER AS IRELAND'S DEFENDER AT THE EUROPEAN COURT IN LUXEMBOURG ON THE FISHERIES PROBLEM (FIRST HEARING MAY 21 WE UNDERSTAND), AND ALSO THE PROSECUTION OF THE IRISH CASE AGAINST THE BRITISH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. KELLY COMES HIGHLY QUALIFIED FOR THE JOB. HE WAS A LAW PROFESSOR, LEGAL SCHOLAR AND
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LEADING JURIST PRIOR TO HIS ENTRY INTO PARLIAMENT IN 1973. HE HAS BEEN TOUGH, ARTICULATE, AND SOMEWHAT ABRASIVE AS THE CHIEF SPOKESMAN FOR THE TAOISEACH, LIAM COSGRAVE, WHO NEVER SAYS A WORD IF HE CAN POSSIBLY AVOID IT.

3. KELLY, AT 46, MUST NOW BE RECKONED AS THE HEIR

APPARENT TO COSGRAVE. COSTELLO, THE FORMER HEIR APPARENT, HAS APPARENTLY MADE A FINAL DECISION TO GIVE UP POLITICS. THE LIBERAL WING OF THE FINE GAEIL PARTY LOSES ONE OF ITS STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS WITH COSTELLO'S DEPARTURE. KELLY SEEMS TO BE A PRAGMATIST WITHOUT A DISCERNIBLE IDEOLOGICAL BIAS. DURING RECENT YEARS HE HAS PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF IMPLACABLE CONSERVATISM, PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC AND LAW-AND-ORDER MEASURES. IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS JUST FAITHFULLY CARRYING OUT HIS JOB AND PROJECTING COSGRAVE'S CONSERVATISM. ONE OF HIS EARLY BOOKS ON CIVIL RIGHTS IS ALMOST A BIBLE TO THE SMALL BAND OF IRISH LIBERALS. RENDAHIL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DUBLIN01146
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770181-0157
Format: TEL
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770537/aaaabfkx.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9932408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2441797
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW IRISH ATTORNEY GENERAL
TAGS: PINR, EI, (COSTELLO, DECLAN), (KELLY, JOHN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9932408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009